

May 15, 2017

**Governor Rick Scott
Plaza Level 05, The Capitol
400 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee FL 32399-0001**

**RE: SB 106 Vendors Licensed Under the Beverage Law Veto Request
Dear Governor Scott:**

I trust this letter will find you and Ann doing well as you both enjoy chasing your grandchildren around these days. Thank you again for the courtesies extended by yourself to Zach and Toni during their recent visit to your office during the session.

Governor, as you know, it is not often I contact you personally about issues important to the organization to which I am President, The Florida Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, Inc. (FERLC). Today will be a notable exception.

To note, the FERLC has as one of its supporters the Florida Baptist Convention headquartered in Jacksonville, Fl. The Florida Baptist Convention serves in cooperation with the Southern Baptist Convention, representing 1 million Florida Baptists in approximately 3,000 churches.

On behalf of the Convention and others, the FERLC has for the past four legislative sessions opposed and spoken out against changing existing law regarding Vendors Licensed Under the Beverage Law.

This year was no different in regards to our opposition to SB 106 and the former HB 81.

SB 106 would eliminate the requirement that hard liquor sales occur through standalone package stores. Hard liquor would be widely available on the shelves of family friendly retail stores.

We believe it is not good public policy to market hard alcohol in stores where teenagers will have access and be subject to additional temptations to shoplift or consume the product inside these often “supersized” family stores. It’s also not a good idea to have the teenagers working the backroom stock rooms around this product for the same reasons.

The current state law proscribing the standalone package store system is a smart deterrent combating teenage shoplifting. Package store employees are at the ready to identify underage patrons who enter their stores. Unless accompanied by a parent, they are quickly asked to depart the premises. We also learned through the committee process, that many

package stores require their employees to be 21 years of age.

On another front, making hard alcohol more readily available will lead to increasing social as well as financial costs to Florida taxpayers. Today, patrons desiring an alcohol purchase make a conscious decision to drive to the package store to make that purchase.

Making these products more convenient to impulse buyers who had no intention of buying hard liquor upon entering a store will no doubt increase hard alcohol sales. Whatever the percentage increases in sales will also represent an accompanying percentage increase in DWI arrests, accidents, and fatalities; as well as domestic abuse, alcohol abuse and addiction.

The current Florida system of hard alcohol/spirits distribution is working well. Not a single constituent came to a committee meeting in the Florida House or Senate asking for this change. Not a single constituent came to Tallahassee to say there is not enough access statewide through package stores purchase this product. This legislation is a totally driven by the retail and the “distilled spirits” special interest industry.

In closing, this proposed legislation was very narrowly passed in both chambers.

Note that in the Florida House it passed by only one vote: 58 to 57. However, just moments after the official final vote, representatives who were not on the chamber floor during the vote immediately came back in to register their NO votes on SB 106. One member changed his Yes vote to a NO vote within minutes of the official vote. In evaluating this “true” sentiment of the Florida House as reflected on the official SB 106 vote sheet, this issue would have failed 57 to 63. I have attached the vote sheet supporting my observations for your review.

Please review these concerns and after careful, thoughtful consideration I would request your veto of SB106.

Thank you very much for your work on behalf of the citizens of the State of Florida.

Blessings to You,